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From: Karen Bernetti <karenbernetti@gmail.com>
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To: JudTestimony
Subject: Family Court & GAL Reform Bill

Testimony for The Judiciary Committee public hearing on Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 10:30
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2015/TOB/H/2015HB-05505-R01-HB.htmA.M>.

If 50% of marriages end in divorce, a HUGE percentage of your electorate will be forced to deal with our incredibly broken family court system. I am interested in being a part of the CT Family Court and GAL reform efforts, and would like to start with sharing my story. 3 Children no longer have a mother because my ex-spouse found an attorney unscrupulous enough to help him cut me out of their lives. My 11-year old daughter, a former DCF foster child, has now lost her second mother and I'm having difficulty finding a single legal entity in this state that cares. The following is a list of the ways the CT Family Court has failed my family ...

1. My ex-husband and I spent two years and over 20,000 dollars to have 2 lawyers and a GAL create a divorce agreement that was absolutely UNENFORCEABLE. Consequences for non-compliance were not included in our agreement and I'm told they rarely are. *This needs to change.* No one should ever have to endure the years of abuse that I have just because an ex-spouse refuses to comply with a parenting plan.
2. I've been told judges don't like to hear about parental alienation. They chose to believe it doesn't exist. *This needs to change.* I too would love to believe its not possible for a parent to do something so despicable. Truth is, I lost 3 kids and 2 homes in 7 months simply because my narcissistic alcoholic ex-spouse figured out how easy it is to manipulate teenagers into hating their mother. Parental alienation must no longer be a tolerated as a clever strategy for winning custody disputes and needs to start being treated as the crime of child abuse that it is.
3. I should not have to navigate the shark-infested waters of the family courts to defend my constitutional right to be a parent [and to protect my children's constitutional right to have a mother] UNREPRESENTED. When one party has an attorney and the other does not, it's not a fair fight. If I committed a crime, I'd be provided an attorney if I couldn't afford one. Why should criminals have more right to representation than I do? *This needs to change.*
4. The time for money provisions in our child support laws are obscene and only serve to create a breeding ground for conflict. *This needs to change.* I waived alimony in lieu of child support. The amount of financial support I need to provide a home that makes it possible to accommodate overnights with my children is the same regardless of the number of nights a week they are with me.
5. On March 25th, 2014 during a live panel discussion on Connecticut Family Court Reform, an attorney proclaimed on National Public Radio that he never met a Guardian ad Litem who didn't "immediately meet with all parties to resolve disputes as quickly as possible". Its no secret that he knows my children's GAL quite well, and it took her 4 months to meet with me, with an outstanding EMERGENCY custody order in place. 18 months later there is still no resolution. During that same panel discussion, the CT Family Courts were likened to the North Korean government. Not too much of an exaggeration if it's true that GAL's operate with complete immunity and no oversight. Not having anyone to answer to would certainly explain her blatant refusal to do her job. *This needs to change.*

Sadly my story is not unique which is why there are so many other victims of abuse/corruption/collusion crying out for reform. I can no longer suffer, in silence, the gross injustice of attorney-assisted parentectomy at the hands of an inept Guardian Ad Litem and corrupt judicial system. This abuse has to stop before more irreparable damage is done to children like mine. I've recently filed a formal grievance, complete with 108 pages of supporting documentation to the Statewide Bar Association Grievance Counsel, DCF, and the Attorney General. I'm sharing this with legislators with the hope that the GAL Reform Bill before you today will be passed.

Thank you for your dedicated service.

Jane Doe